

NSC BRIEFING

23 March 1955

POUJADE "MOVEMENT"

- I. Leader is Pierre Poujade, 35-year-old stationer of Saint-Cere (Lot), in south central France.
 - A. Said in youth to have been Doriot Fascist, later Gaullist: was NCO in WWII Resistance.
 - B. His "Movement" is well-entrenched in home south-central area (France's poorest section), has extensive support in Southeast, is growing rapidly in north.
 - C. "Movement" entitled "Union for the Defense of Merchants and Artisans" (UDCA).
 - D. Aim--to protect small shopkeeper from tax inspector; to press for lower and differently apportioned taxes.
 - E. Specifically opposes '54 tax law (which provides penalties against withholders of tax information).
 - F. Poujade claims 800,000 followers: 400,000 dues-paying members (at 1,000 francs yearly) provide him with war-chest over \$1,000,000.
 - G. Poujade now seeking stronger agricultural and peasant support, in addition to shopkeepers.
- II. "Movement" is outgrowth of accumulating economic pressures on small shop-owners since WWII.
 - A. As class, live marginal lives: fiercely proud of being self-employed, bourgeoisie.
 - B. Have been badly squeezed by competition of cooperatives, chain stores.

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- C. Are also targets of government drive for consolidation and removal of marginal enterprises. /

III. "Movement" already has exerted strong pressures on government:

- A. Was largely responsible for delaying Premier Faure's attempt to get special powers to revise taxes.
- B. Final Assembly debate on special powers (28 Mar) now regarded as showdown between "government authority" and Poujade's "pressure from the street."
- C. Poujade waging vigorous campaign for Assembly support in 28 March debate.
 - 1. Has broken off all contacts with deputies, claiming they betrayed UDCA in earlier debate (19 Mar), when he had expected support from 300.
- D. Plans two-hour protest strike of merchants on 28th.
 - 1. This is a Monday, when most shops normally closed, so will be inconclusive indication his strength.

IV. Poujade "Movement's" growing strength interpreted by some observers as threat to Republic.

- A. Non-Communist labor unions charge definite fascist overtones, citing Poujade's pre-war fascist affiliation.
- B. Signs of anti-semitism in his attacks on Mendes-France.
- C. Poujade takes anti-parliament stand, has made vicious attacks on individuals and government.
 - 1. In letter to Faure, said "The National Assembly closed all the bordellos in France but kept the biggest one open" (i.e. Assembly, itself).